

A LIFE AND A LESSON.

AN ADDRESS

BY

REV. DR. D. B. WILLSON,

Professor in Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary,
Allegheny, Pa.,

AT THE

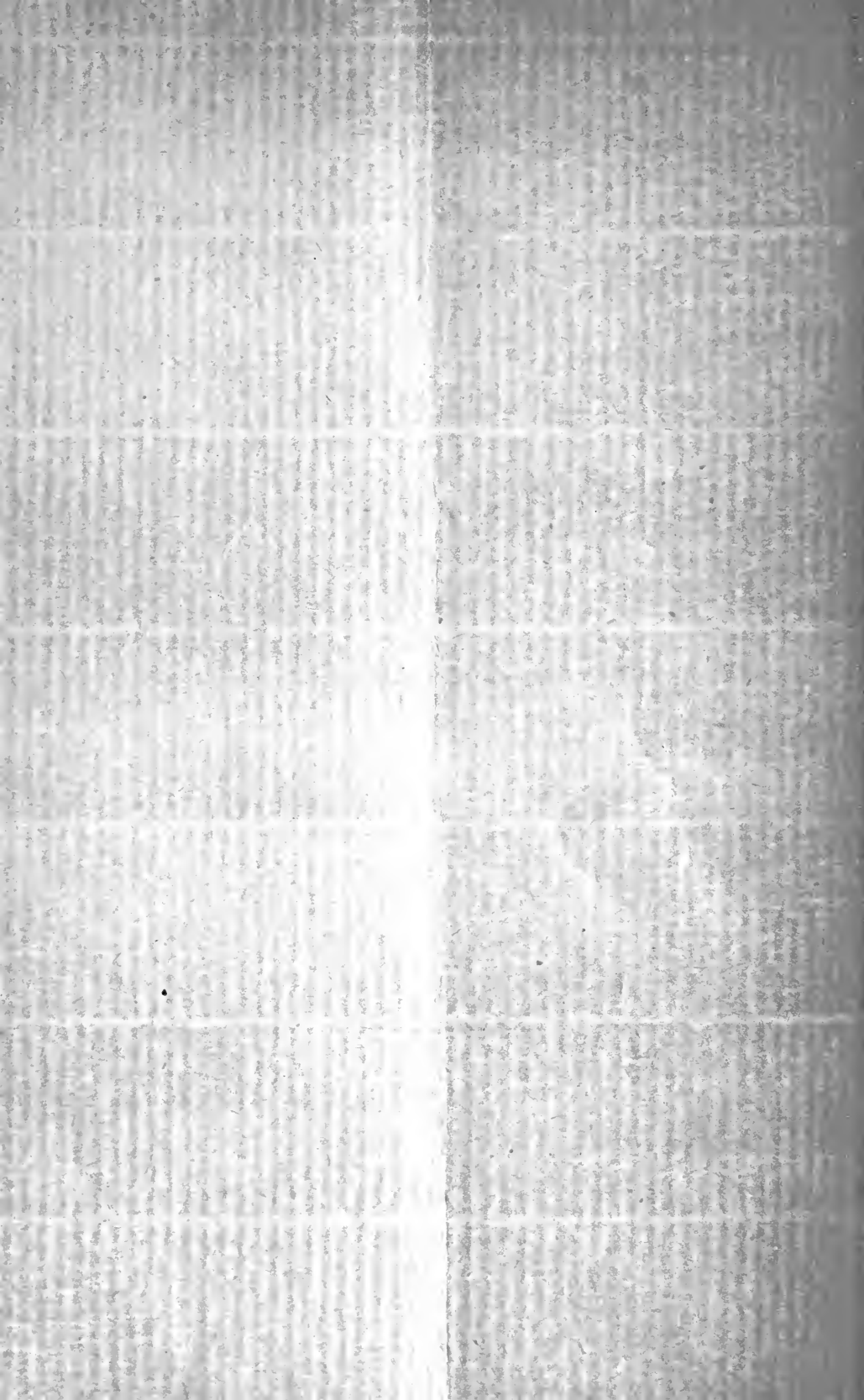
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Gentlemen of the Theological Class :—We welcome you to-night at your appearing to take up the studies of this session.

In addressing you, I depart somewhat from the usual course in the choice of a subject. I am to speak of a leader of men, not however, of one who served the church, but the nation, who in serving the nation served God, whom God led by a way he knew not, till he bowed, and owned his power and justice, and came to know his goodness—the martyred president, the smitten head of a sinning nation.

“The careers of good and great men are the true beacons of human progress. They are lights set upon a hill, illuminating the moral atmosphere around them, and their thoughts and deeds hallow the nations to which they belong, and become the most priceless legacies of mankind.” * I wish to look at Mr. Lincoln in no ideal light, and to observe what one † has said having him in view: “History is after all the crystallization of popular beliefs. Popular beliefs, in time, come to be superstitions, and create gods and devils. Thus Washington is deified into an impossible man, and Aaron Burr has passed into a like impossible human monster. Through the same process Abraham Lincoln, one of our truly great, has almost gone from human knowledge.” We must, therefore, first regard the record of his life.

Abraham Lincoln was born in the slave State of Kentucky, in 1809, and removed with his parents to Indiana in his eighth year. They remained there until he was nineteen, when they migrated to Illinois. When he was nearly of age, he left home to begin life on his own account. His school privileges are reckoned by weeks, not by years, not by months; but he was an eager reader. He had searched out, and read all the books he heard of within a circuit of fifty miles. He was industrious, energetic and never tasted liquor.

* Colfax.

† Donn Piatt.

In company with Thomas Hanks, he made his way with a trading boat down to New Orleans in 1831. At Natchez, a thieving negro came on the boat, and when Mr. Lincoln, hearing the noise, was coming by the hatch to the deck, the negro struck him on the head. He bore the scar through life, and his life was probably saved by the slant of the weapon, which struck the deck beyond the hatch. At New Orleans, he saw negroes chained and maltreated, whipped and scourged; and his companion, Hanks, said, that slavery ran its iron into his soul, then and there—that is in May, 1831, at New Orleans. In 1834 he was chosen a representative in the Illinois Legislature from Sangamon county, and the *House Journal* of March 3, 1836, records the protest of himself and another representative against a resolution of the house. They say: "They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy; but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than to abate its evils." He had been studying law, and this year, 1836, he was admitted to the bar, and in 1837, he removed to Springfield, and became a partner with John T. Stuart. In 1842, he married Miss Todd, of Lexington, in the slave State of Kentucky. In 1846, he was elected a representative in congress. In politics, he was a Whig, and a follower of Henry Clay, up to the death of the latter in 1852. He voted for Taylor in 1848, and for Scott in 1852. He recognized that the Union was formed with slavery in existence, and that the Constitution provided for its protection, regard being had to it as a local institution. He was a conservative Whig, not only in the bands of the Constitution, but also as to the negro himself. Herein appeared the influence of the surroundings of his early life. Later on, B. F. Butler, who never saw him till 1861, discerned this in him. He says: "Like all southern men, Mr. Lincoln did not understand the negro character. He doubted very much whether the negro and the white man could possibly live together in any other condition than that of slavery. He was disturbed to the last as to the result of free negroes in the south." Yet all along his vision was clear as to the opposing forces. In the year 1850, he said to Mr. Stuart, his law partner: "The time will come when we must all be Democrats or Abolitionists. When that time comes my mind is made up." The passage of the Nebraska Act in 1854 involved the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and intensified the conflict between freedom and slavery. The parties at this time may be classified as follows: 1. Those that contended that slavery was national, and freedom sectional, and who would break all compromises that limited the invasion of the territories. 2. Those who contended that slavery was a matter for the States, and not for the general government, and that the territories in framing State constitutions, must settle the question for themselves, this settlement to be recognized by the general government. 3. Those who contended that freedom was national, and slavery sectional, and that the boundaries of slavery had been set, and that the territories were to be devoted to freedom

4. Those who contended that slavery being wrong, it was to be abolished at any cost. It was a crime. As to how it was to be abolished, they differed. Mr. Lincoln belonged to the third party named, slavery must not enter the territories. He was a party man, not as one who believed the principles of the party and much more, but he was truly a man of the party. Hence in 1856, he was a Whig Republican, not an Abolition Republican. He was a conservative Republican. "He had a profound reverence for the Constitution upon which the Union was founded which recognized slavery as a local institution.*" "Mr. Lincoln was as devoted to the Constitution, as was ever Mr. Webster."† "The Constitution indeed was the fetich of the pre-rebellion period of our history, and it commanded the loyal worship of nearly all the earlier statesmen of the republic."‡ Mr. Lincoln first came into national view in 1858. The Illinois Legislature was to choose a successor to Stephen A. Douglas, as United States Senator, and the Republican State Convention nominated Mr. Lincoln. He prepared in advance, and with care his remarks for the convention. He had shown his address to a circle of friends. They urged him to erase one paragraph, as certain to be used by Senator Douglas to his hurt before the people. But he had not his heart set upon his personal success in that contest for the senatorship. He sought to teach the people. At Ottawa during the canvass he said: "In this and like communities public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently he who moulds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed." With such views, he said to his friends during the canvass, as to the paragraph they had questioned. "If I had to draw a pen across and erase my whole life from existence, and I had one poor gift or choice left as to what I should save from the wreck, I should choose that speech, and leave it to the world unerased." The paragraph which he held to, and uttered to the convention, and thus to the world, was: "In my opinion it (agitation) will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved, I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided." A joint canvass of the State by the candidates was arranged, and carried out, and the matter in dispute was sifted before the people. The legislature chose Douglas by a vote of fifty-four out of one hundred, for the term 1859-65. (He died at Chicago in June, 1861.) Mr. Lincoln thus brought before the nation, was invited by New York Republicans to come east and give an address, and on February 27, 1860, he made this address in the Cooper Institute, going back over the history of slavery and the Constitution.

After his election to the presidency in the following November, he

* Hugh McCulloch.

† George S. Boutwell.

‡ Allen Thorndike Rice.

thought the agitation in the South might allay, if his policy prevailed. Donn Piatt says of him at that time, that "he could not understand that men would get up in their wrath and fight for an idea." It seems rather that he could not understand how the Union would not remain so sacred for them as to be free from assault. Soon after his election, he said to a Kentucky Democrat: "The Fugitive Slave Law will be better administered under my administration than it has ever been under that of my predecessors. If your party has been honest in its execution, I will see that my party is equally honest in its execution." This assurance, he declined, however, to give out in advance of his inauguration. His inaugural address "was devoted altogether to saving the Union without war."* In it he said: "I have no purpose directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States wherein it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." The persuasive methods of Mr. Lincoln and his friends for the adjustment of the differences between the unionists and disunionists were destroyed by Beauregard's bombardment of Fort Sumter. The business of active war was inaugurated.

From the first, there was a radical element in the party that elected him, that urged the immediate linking of the Union cause with emancipation. Mr. Lincoln held out against them for more than a year. He believed that the North was not ready for this; Mr. Rice has said: "He never went faster nor further than to enforce the will of the people that elected him." But there was something else that held him back. He had a regard to the Border States—eminently Kentucky, his native State. He said: "Kentucky must not be precipitated into secession. She is the key to the situation." On the 10th of March, 1862, he assured certain representatives of the Border States that they need not fear direct or indirect action by the Government as through the emancipation of slaves in the District of Columbia, or the confiscation of southern property in slaves. Many in his party could not understand his tenderness to this one kind of "property"—property in man, while other property and human lives were destroyed by war. Horace Greeley spoke their voice in the *Tribune* of August 21, 1862, and Mr. Lincoln replied on August 22, 1862: "If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it. If I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. I have here stated my purpose according to my view of *official* duty, since I intend no modification of my often expressed *personal* wish that all men everywhere could be free." To the plea that emancipation would give a holy motive and a sacred object to the war, he replied: "We already have an important principle to rally and unite the people in the fact that constitutional government is at stake—a fundamental idea going down about as

* Language of Second Inaugural.

deep as anything." Meanwhile, his usual equanimity forsook him, and he became angered when Union officers took on them to free the slaves. He, himself, must judge of the necessity for this step, to save the Union. As to slavery, he had a cherished plan of his own. His heart was set on the purchase and colonization of the slaves of all the Southern States. He thought his plan reasonable, and just, as the nation was involved in the wrong. He thought his voice would be heard amid the storm. He learned otherwise, but he was not unwilling to learn. He turned not away his shoulder, nor did he stop his ears. Colfax says: "The success of the national cause was with Mr. Lincoln as President, immeasurably higher than all other considerations, personal, political, or humanitarian. He could not strike at slavery until all other measures had failed. But at last when forbearance had ceased to be a virtue, when every family altar was crimsoned with blood, every cemetery crowded with patriot graves, he felt the hour had struck and he was ready." Mr. Stoddard, one of his private secretaries, has written: "Even as he patiently waited for the rebellion, knowing that it would surely come, so he now waited for the hour of the emancipation proclamation with faith in God that it would also come." Not quite so. It appears that as Saul of Tarsus he was "kicking against the pricks." He had his heart set on another way of securing peace, lasting peace. As a last resort, in the nation's dire extremity, he would free the slaves, or as he afterwards stated it in a letter to Mr. Hodges, of Frankfort, Ky.: "I felt that measures otherwise unconstitutional might become lawful by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the constitution through the preservation of the nation." Meanwhile the call of the radicals continued, unwelcome radical legislation pressed on him for approval or disapproval, the nation was in distress. "There was perhaps no darker period during the whole war than that in which the summer of 1862 came to a close; and we may safely say that no one throughout the land felt more deeply the reverses and sufferings of his countrymen than President Lincoln."* Amid all these difficulties Gen. McClellan had taken on himself to write to the President on July 7, 1862, from his camp near Harrison's Landing: "Forceful abolition of slavery should not be contemplated for a moment. A declaration of radical views, especially upon slavery, will rapidly disintegrate our present armies." But he had weakened his influence. To the delegation of ministers on September 13, 1862, who urged emancipation on him as the will of God, the President said: "Unless I am more deceived in myself than I often am, it is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter; and if I can learn what it is, I will do it." But by this time there was no evasion for him, even with all the bias of his early life creating difficulties, his view of his constitutional obligation to the system of slavery, and all his attachment to his own plans. He was now pressed above measure on all sides. I have referred to the military

* Thomas, Dictionary of Biography and Mythology, under name.

situation. As to congress, he told Hon. Edward Stanly, military governor of North Carolina, on the 27th of September, 1862, five days after the preliminary emancipation proclamation was issued, that he even feared the withholding of supplies if he resisted. Mr. Stanly was a Border State man, and was for the Union *and* slavery. He quoted Mr. Lincoln as saying that he had prayed to the Almighty to save him from this necessity, adopting the very language of our Saviour: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," but the prayer had not been answered. George W. Julian has said: "Fewer subjects have been more debated and less understood than the proclamation of emancipation. Mr. Lincoln himself was opposed to the measure, and when he very reluctantly issued the preliminary proclamation in September, 1862, he wished it distinctly understood that the deportation of the slave was in his mind inseparably connected with the policy. He believed in colonization, pressing colonization in Central America."* Mr. Julian adds that "Mr. Lincoln said that opposition to that (anti-slavery) element involved more serious consequences than offending the Border States. He finally yielded to this pressure." Reuben E. Fenton has said of him: "He was always politician as well as statesman."

Mr. Markland says: "As President he was controlled only by law and the equities. He always had the courage to do the proper thing at the proper time." We must now go back to the month of July, 1862. He called the cabinet together on the 22d day of July, to read to them the draft of his preliminary proclamation, not to consult them as to the step, but to hear their remarks upon it. After he had read it, Mr. Seward observed that it would appear, if issued then in time of reverse, as "the Government stretching out its hands to Ethiopia, instead of Ethiopia stretching out its hands to the Government," and that it would "better follow some notable military success." This commended itself to Mr. Lincoln's good sense, and he afterwards phrased Mr. Seward's view of it as if then it was "the last shriek upon the retreat." He told Mr. Carpenter,† "but nothing was offered that I had not fully anticipated and settled in my own mind until Secretary Seward spoke. The wisdom of the view of the Secretary of State struck me with very great force. It was an aspect of the case that in all my thought upon the subject, I had entirely overlooked." He put the proclamation away—for a time. And yet he must have seen that Mr. Seward's remark cut down his view of the act of emancipation, as only to be done in a dire necessity—it ought not to follow victory. The battle of Antietam was fought on Wednesday, September 17th, and not till Saturday was it fully known in Washington that it was a victory for the Union army. The President called the cabinet together on Monday, September 22d, and told them of his purpose to issue the proclamation, telling them that "public sentiment will now sustain it," and added in a low voice: "And I have promised my Maker I will do it."

* See also the Message, December 3, 1861.

† Six months at the White House, pp. 20-22.

Secretary Chase was near him, and inquired: "Did I understand you correctly, Mr. President?" He answered: "I made a solemn vow before God that if General Lee should be driven back from Pennsylvania, I would crown the result by the declaration of freedom to the slaves." So on that day, the 22d day of September, 1862, it came forth. Yet withal it was only preliminary, and gave the rebels one hundred days—until the beginning of the year following, to return to their allegiance. It contemplated compensation to slave owners in places where there was no rebellion, and included colonization. It embodied the Act of Congress, of July 16, 1862, that slaves were to be given up where the owner could swear to his loyalty, and assured all citizens remaining loyal that they would be compensated for all losses, including slaves. Great as was the mental struggle, that brought the President to this act, yet any further assertion of his military authority in the direction of emancipation depended on the continued resistance of the South, not on its past crime and the present attitude of rebellion. All this time the heart of the President was set on purchased emancipation coupled with colonization, and in his message to Congress, December 1, 1862, he recommended a constitutional amendment with three articles: 1. Compensation to States providing for abolishing slavery before 1900. 2. Freedom to slaves actually freed by the operation of war, with compensation to loyal owners. 3. Provision for colonization. There was no action by Congress on this, no response from the Border States, no voice of submission from the rebel hosts. They did not understand him. We did not understand him. He had sought to avert the war, reasoning with the South. He failed. He had a cherished plan for gaining a lasting peace, by removing the cause of the war. He urged it on the slaveholders, but with poor success. He was baffled and beaten back. He could not control events. He cast the matter over on the Providence of God. He waited, "waiting for victory." He failed to understand the devotion to slavery, the haughty spirit of the South, their lust of power, fostered by years of mastery.

The year 1862 was drawing to a close. His was no vacillating mind, when he had uttered the word. The Cabinet was called on the 30th of December, and copies of his forthcoming proclamation were given to each member, and criticisms were invited. Papers were handed in by members of the Cabinet on the 31st, of December and with them before him, Mr. Lincoln re-wrote the paper, and after the New Year's Reception gave it out to the country. Mr. Chase's letter to him, of Dec. 31st, concluded thus: "Finally, I respectfully suggest, that on an occasion of such interest, there can be no just imputation of affectation again a solemn recognition of responsibility before men and before God, and that some such close as follows would be proper: "And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice warranted by the Constitution, and of duty demanded by the circumstances of the country, I invoke the considerate judgment of man-

kind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God." The sentence appeared at the close of the proclamation thus modified: "And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God." There was no drawing back. July 22 and September 22 had prepared the way. "These dates had witnessed the mental conflict and the moral victory."*

He was called upon to justify his act. This he did, but beset as he was, he was led to say in March 1863, "My proclamation was to stir the country, but it has done about as much harm as good." He was anxious as to the result. He knew not how the courts might construe his act. John A. Campbell, the rebel Assistant Secretary of War, quotes Mr. Lincoln, as saying at the Hampton Roads Conference; "It would be held to apply only to such slaves as had come under its operations, while it was in active exercise. This was his individual opinion."†

On the 1st of Feb. 1865, addressing the people at Washington, Mr. Lincoln said of the 13th Amendment: "The proclamation falls far short of what the Amendment will be when fully consummated. This amendment is a King's cure for all the evils." He set himself to perfect the result, urging on the Border States, the acceptance of compensation for slaves. Nor was he yet through with propositions to the rebels to hasten the end, for even after his return from the Hampton Roads Conference with the rebel leaders as late as February, 1865, he proposed to his Cabinet a message to Congress for an appropriation of \$400,000,000 to support the offer of compensation for the abolishment of slavery, provided the armies in rebellion would disband and submit, one-half to be paid down, and one-half if the 13th Amendment was passed by a majority of the States, by the 1st of July. The Cabinet unanimously disapproved this, to Mr. Lincoln's regret. It was felt that the South could not understand his spirit. He sought a civil remedy for slavery—by purchase, joining with it his plan for colonization. Kentucky especially resisted his pleading. He had had the satisfaction of signing as far back as April 1862, the act abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, in which was the provision of payment for slaves at an average not exceeding \$300 each and of help for those migrating to Hayti or Liberia. The war still raged to the distress of the nation. How far away seemed peace! Mr. Lincoln earnestly desired re-election. Mr. Chase had his friends and was named for the place, and under all the circumstances in 1864, the appointment of Mr. Chase to succeed Roger B. Taney as Chief Justice marks not only the generosity of Mr. Lincoln's spirit, but his deep desire that the slave might have a friend where he had so long an enemy, in the seat of the Chief Justice of the United States.

We come now to his Second Inaugural. Familiar as it is, I yet quote it largely: "The Almighty has his own purposes, 'Woe

* History by Nicolay & Hay, vi, 429. † Southern Magazine, Dec., 1874, p. 292.

unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.' If we should suppose that American slavery is one of those offences, which, in the providence of God must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said: "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." Herein appears the result I referred to in opening. God led him by a way he knew not, till he bowed and owned his power and justice. Comparing the first and second inaugurations, Mr. Stoddard says of the latter: "The multitude was not the same. The man was the same and yet he was not, for behind him as behind them was the fire of the seven-fold furnace through which God had led him. No smell of burning was upon his garments of integrity and faith, but his fetters had been largely burned away." As to the paper, he says: "Nothing at all resembling it had ever been heard before. A ruler publicly receiving the trust of four years more of power, felt called upon to set before the people the result of his profound study and analysis of the Divine Providence, as presented in the Scriptures, and to call upon them to join him in acknowledging the wisdom and justice of God." Just one month from the date of his inaugural, Mr. Lincoln was in Richmond. Sabbath night, April 2, 1865, the rebel authorities forsook the city, and thirty-six hours after Mr. Davis left, President Lincoln walked up its streets, his only guard being ten sailors who had rowed him in the barge from above the obstructions in the James river to the landing. The colored people were wild with joy and as he saw them, and their reverence for him, tears poured down his cheeks. The next week he was assassinated in Washington. His life was part of the price.

What was averted by the madness of the South, by the wrath of man? One of the last acts of James Buchanan was to sign a resolution submitting to the States the following amendment: "No amendment shall be made to the Constitution which will authorize or give to Congress the power to abolish or interfere within any State with the domestic institutions thereof, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said State." At the time Mr. Lincoln died, the 13th Amendment, which is, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction. Congress shall have power to en-

force this article by appropriate legislation," had been ratified by twenty States, among them Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, Missouri, Louisiana, and Tennessee. Kentucky did not ratify it. The end was in view, the end he sought—constitutional deliverance from the sin of slavery.

When he came into office, and the war began, his burdens drove him to thoughts of God. October 3, 1861, he sent his photograph to Mrs. Speed with this written: "For Mrs. Lucy G. Speed from whose pious hand I accepted the present of an Oxford Bible twenty years ago." Mr. Stoddard, a private Secretary, says; "The year 1862 was a period of rapid growth for Abraham Lincoln." This we remember, was a year of great trial, including for him the personal trial of the loss of a son. The thoughts of the second inaugural were coming forward even then in 1862, several years before their formal utterance. A private paper of Mr. Lincoln, penned in September 1862 and first published in the history by Nicolay & Hay,* is as follows: "The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both *may* be and one *must* be wrong. God cannot be *for* and *against* the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purposes of either party; and yet the human instrumentalities working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect his purpose. I am almost ready to say that this is probably true, that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By his mere great power on the minds of the now contestants, he could have either *saved* or *destroyed* the nation without a human contest. Yet the contest began, and being begun, he could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds." The same thoughts re-appear again in his letter to Mrs. Gurney, Sept. 4, 1864: "The purposes of the Almighty are perfect and must prevail." "The fateful times in which he acted the foremost part were larger than any of the men who lived in them, tall and commanding as is the figure of the benign war President, and the events then moving over the dial of history were grander than the statesmen or soldiers who touched the springs that made them move."† He wrought with great men—Seward, Stanton and Chase. God wrought by him, causing him to serve. We have seen that the Proclamation of September 22, 1862 went forth because of a vow. On the 16th, of November of that year, he issued his Sabbath Order, which says: "The discipline and character of the national forces should not suffer, nor the cause they defend be imperiled by the profanation of the day, or the name of the Most High." After this appropriately follows the proclamation of the 30th of March 1863 for a National Fast, wherein it is said: "It is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the over-ruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to

* Volume vi, page 342.

† James C. Welling.

mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures, and proved by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord; and inasmuch as we know that by his divine law, nations like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. It behooves us to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness." If that was true thirty years ago, what must be said now?

Mr. Emerson* said of Mr. Lincoln: "He is the true history of the American people in his time—the true representative of this continent, father of his country, the pulse of twenty millions throbbing in his heart, the thoughts of their minds articulated by his tongue." This is my conception of him, and here is the culmination of this discourse to you. Mr. Lincoln appears to me as the true embodiment of the nation. He was moulded by its civil institutions, not by the church. He never, as we usually express it, belonged to the church. He took the Constitution as it was, with its binding obligation to do wrong, as the measure of his duty. He did not attempt to explain it away or to evade its provisions. He was one with the sinning nation in its sin, purposely and consciously so. When God scourged the nation he saw the dilemma, but the wrath must descend, for he cannot do the right towards God as President. The people must will to do it; he is but their agent. The Lord brought him a step farther on. In his message of December 8, 1863, he said: "While I remain in my present position I shall not attempt to retract or modify the emancipation proclamation, nor shall I return to slavery any person who is free by the terms of that proclamation, or by any of the acts of Congress." Again he said this in his message of December 6, 1864, after his re-election, and added: "If the people should, by whatever mode or means, make it an executive duty to re-enslave such persons, another and not I must be their instrument to perform it." His name goes down to history as the Great Emancipator. It is true that "the colored people from the hour of his inauguration regarded Mr. Lincoln as the promised savior of their race. Their faith in his wisdom and power was unbounded."† Nevertheless, as to himself, "It is an error to class him with the noble band of abolitionists to whom neither Church nor State was sacred when it sheltered slavery."‡ His views are fully given in his letter of April 4, 1864, to Mr. Hodges, of Frankfort, Kentucky: "I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel, and yet I have

* Address, Concord, Mass., April 19, 1865. † Reminiscences, L. E. Chittenden.

‡ Allen Thorndike Rice.

never understood that the Presidency conferred on me the unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration, this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary and abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I did understand, however, that my oath to preserve the Constitution to the best of my ability imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that government—that nation, of which the Constitution was the organic law. I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union and with it the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter.” Slaveholding Kentuckians, as a class, could see no such alternative. But with his knowledge of the truth as to human bondage, God scourged him and the nation till he came to freeing the slave, and with him the nation. It moved with him. Even as early as November 5, 1861, George Bancroft, the historian, who had been in the cabinet of James K. Polk, wrote to Mr. Lincoln: “Your administration has fallen upon times which will be remembered as long as human events find a record. I sincerely wish to you the glory of perfect success. Civil war is the instrument of Divine Providence to root out social slavery; posterity will not be satisfied with the result, unless the consequences of the war should effect an increase of free States. This is the universal expectation and hope of men of all parties.”* We have seen how the step of proclaiming emancipation came about. I further quote what Secretary Welles wrote in his diary, September 22, 1862: “In the course of discussion on this paper, which was long, earnest, and on the general principle involved, harmonious, he (the President) remarked that he had made a vow—a covenant—that if God gave us the victory in the approaching battle, he would consider it an indication of Divine will, and that it was his duty to move forward in the cause of emancipation. It might be thought strange, he said, that he had in this way submitted the disposal of matters where his way was not clear to his mind what he should do. God had decided in favor of the slaves. He was satisfied it was right, and was confirmed and strengthened in his action by the vow and the results.” On the Sabbath day that the funeral procession halted in Philadelphia, in April, 1865, Phillips Brooks discoursed as to Mr. Lincoln, his text being Psalm 78: 21-23. He said: “With all true men it is not what they intend to do, but it is what the qualities of their nature bind them to do, that determines their career. Such a man must always live as he used to say he lived (and was blamed for saying it), “controlled by events, not controlling them.” And with a reverent and clear mind, to be controlled by events means to be controlled by

*History, Nicolay and Hay, V, 202.

God." Thus the nation hearkened unto God, to break off its sin by righteousness and its iniquity by showing mercy to the poor. There has been a lengthening of its tranquillity.

There is a lesson here. There are national sins yet remaining, there are many questions yet unsettled that must be settled. There is the question of the national observance of the Sabbath. What a conflict there has been for these few years past, how the hearts of millions have been stirred as to the Sabbath and the Fair! Now at last the opinion of a local judge thwarts their will. This only intensifies the conflict. The matter cannot rest. For law to enjoin immorality, the decree unquestioned, is but to summon God. "It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law." There is the question of the law of the family relation, most intimately connected with the welfare of the nation, affecting the homes of the people. There is the liquor question, that has troubled the country all through its history. This interest is as aggressive, as cruel, as unscrupulous and as lawless as was ever the slave power. It is protected as an interest by the government. Above all there is this, the foremost question, shall this country in a constitutional way (the only way it has of formally avowing its purpose) own the authority of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ? This the Senate of the United States did, in 1863: "Resolved, That devoutly recognizing the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and of nations, and sincerely believing that no people, however great in numbers and resources, or however strong in the justice of their cause, can prosper without his favor; and at the same time deploring the national offences which have provoked his righteous judgment, yet encouraged in this day of trouble by the assurance of his word, to seek him for succor according to his appointed way, through Jesus Christ, the Senate of the United States do hereby request the President of the United States, by his proclamation, to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation" The trouble passed, the relief came. We are one people again in national boundaries. But are we one people in the remaining great moral issues that determine the life of a nation? By no means. Was it taken as keen judgment and foresight that led a candidate for the United States Senate in 1858 to say that a house divided against itself cannot stand, that he did not expect the house to fall, but he did expect to see it cease to be divided? He lived just long enough to see it cease to be divided on the one great moral issue. But it needs no great gift of prophecy to say the same thing as to the other great issues, I have noticed. In Psalm 2: 12, the address to rulers is, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." In Luke, 20: 17, we read: "What is this that is written, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder." Mr. Lincoln, in 1858,

said of this nation as to the former contest: "I do not expect the house to fall," and Secretary Usher of his Cabinet has said: "There was never an hour during all the war in which he had any doubt of the ultimate success of the Union armies." What is our confidence? This is a land of Bibles, and schools, and churches, and preachers. Millions every Sabbath are studying the lessons of the Word of God, and the hopes of many people centre here.

Under whom will the change come? For many years it was asked, why has no one of the Presidents been a professing Christian? Various answers were given, none reflecting on the church. At last, a professing Christian was chosen, but the cutting off of his life, as Mr. Lincoln's, by an assassin left unanswered questions as to service to the country by such a man. Another was chosen in 1888, an office-bearer in the church, a Presbyterian. What was the effect? I refer not to his private life, but to the effect of his official life on the moral progress of the country. Did he take any stand on the great moral issues, before the country, and try to forward any of them as Mr. Lincoln strove in his own way to secure emancipation, urging constantly upon congress his plan for securing it, because he had the cause at heart? By no means. As to the Sabbath day, though the people were moved, though representative men and women went to Washington on the subject, though the conflict entered the houses of congress as to the Columbian Exposition, he pressed not this moral question in his messages to congress. Dr. W. F. Crafts says: "Far more at fault than even Judges Stein and Goggin, than President Cleveland and Attorney General Olney and Chief Justice Fuller, all of whom have clearly neglected duty or perverted law, are President Harrison and ex-Secretary of the Treasury Foster, both of whom were informed by the writer and others, when only one-fifth of the appropriation had been paid, that the legislature of Illinois had never authorized the use of Jackson Park for the Fair, so that the directors' promise to close it was worthless and needed to be validated by an act of legislature or by an adequate bond. President Harrison made no response except that he would consider the facts presented. Secretary Foster said he favored Sabbath opening, and would do nothing to hinder it, allowing personal opinion to crowd out public duty.* As to the authority of Christ, a Committee of the National Reform Association urged on the President to honor the Lord in his proclamations of thanksgiving, without effect. One † of the committee, a minister of his own church, a zealous reformer, said that it was one thing to omit reference to Christ, and another thing to decline, when attention was called to it. Another office bearer in the same church became head of the postal service, an agency that as administered, has done as much as any other, if not more than any other, to break down regard for the Sabbath, as it penetrates all parts of the land. Yet in 1813, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church memorialized congress as follows, as to the Sabbath mail service: "Your petitioners feel

* *Christian Statesman*, Sept. 9, 1893.

† Rev. Dr. I. N. Hays.

themselves constrained in their office as rulers in the church, to exercise the discipline of that church against those of their members who break the Sabbath in carrying or opening the mail on that day. Your petitioners are the more deeply impressed with the importance of a strict observance of the Sabbath, and the necessity of an alteration in the existing regulations of the post office, as far as they relate to the Sabbath, from the prospect of a war. As they firmly believe in the special providence of God, and that this providence is exercised according to those principles of truth and equity revealed in the Scriptures, they fear, and have just reason to fear, that the infractions of the Sabbath allowed by civil law, will draw down upon our nation the divine displeasure. God honors those who honor him, and casts down those who forget him. Obedience to his will adds dignity to rulers, and enforces subjection in those who are ruled." The business firm with which the ex-Postmaster General is connected sought to proceed against the directory of the Columbian Exposition for opening on the Lord's day. But how of the department he managed under law for four years? Evidently the time is fast approaching in the discussions of the day, when professing Christians will not take and hold these places without having framed some excuse for the national sins. Thus having knowledge without fruit, God will not lead them on and use them as instruments to achieve great moral reforms in their high places. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." John 7: 17. Let us not plant our hopes in Christian Executive power—it is hampered and limited by an acceptance, with all the light, of the will of the people with no higher reference, as the basis of action. What will come? God will prepare his agents, men of the people, whose hearts he will burden with a sense of the nation's sins; they will be led under his word and providence, and become guides for the nation, which permeated by the truth will be ready to follow, and the end will be reached. "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

What is the bearing of all this for us? Let our people be content, yes, glad to keep out of entanglements wherein conscience would disturb as under engagement to execute the wrong. Many Christian men to-day are thus involved.* Let us be content, yes, glad to hold our places as teachers of the Word of God. Idealists

* I do not refer in this connection to words such as those of Senator Wade at Marietta, Ohio, September 24, 1863: "I concede that the Constitution may have designated conventionally rights that we were bound to maintain, notwithstanding they were abhorrent to all the principles of the Almighty and his law," but to the more recent language of such men as the esteemed jurist Judge Thayer, of Philadelphia, who says as to the law of divorce in its operation: "I have made many entries against the dictates of my own conscience. I felt it was wrong, yet I was obliged by my official oath to do it, because I had sworn to administer the law, and I am obliged to administer the law not as I would like it to be, not as a Christian and moral people would like it to be, but as I find it. I am bound, and every judge is bound, hand and foot in this matter."—*Christian State*, December, 1892, Extra, page 7.

men may term us and themselves practical men. It matters not. Count it a privilege to teach the Word of God to men and nations, to discuss all questions in the light of God's Word. Concern not yourselves with success, though that will come, Cassius M. Clay had done noble service in his native State of Kentucky for freedom and Mr. Lincoln, after his nomination, had thought of him for his cabinet as war secretary. But he left him out, owing to opposition to him, and said: "I was persuaded that such appointment of you would be a declaration of war against the South, and whoever heard of a reformer reaping the reward of his labors in his life time?" Mr. Clay was also seen by that intimate friend of Mr. Lincoln, Edward D. Baker, who fell at Ball's Bluff. He satisfied Mr. Clay with words that are significant in view of his own untimely death: "You have made great sacrifices, but does not patriotism require still more?" Each generation of the Lord's servants must remember their Master's words: "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor; other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors." We reap after the labors of former generations. We are to sow that another may reap. Both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall yet rejoice together.

